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ART'S COLLABORATION WITH LITERATURE

BY EDWARD KING

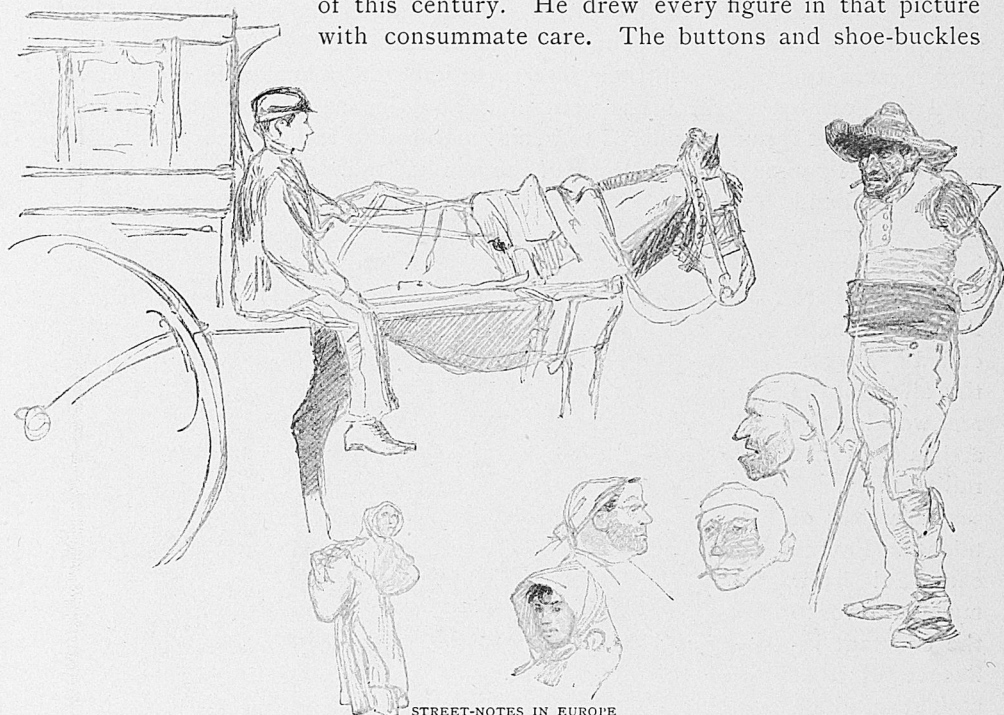
With original illustrations by C. S. Reinhart.



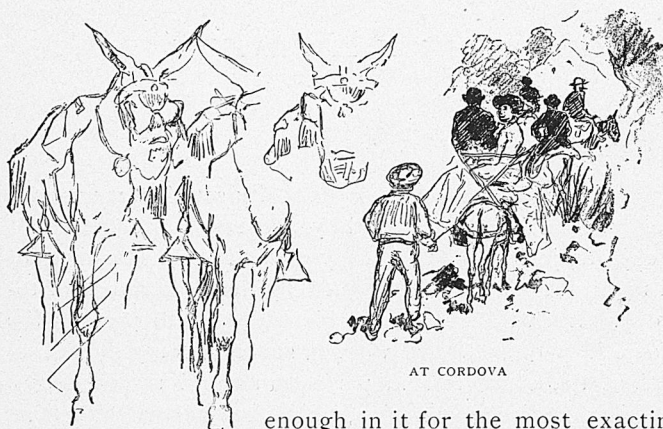
CARICATURE OF WM. M. CHASE

If any proof were needed that the really satisfactory results in art and literature are secured by accurate reproduction of visible objects, joined to deep study of the hidden meanings of life and nature, it would be furnished by the illustrators of to-day. Even the novelist, in his endeavor to portray the emotions of men and women, succeeds only if able to place the characters in perfectly natural surroundings. This analytical generation, which has parted with most of its illusions, views with suspicion any attempt to create a new one. No man of genius could now arouse enthusiasm in the public if, having created a series of typical characters, he should venture, through negligence, to give them an unreal background. We are at present as far removed from the art of Chateaubriand as from that of the naïve artificers who fabricated romances like "Amadis de Gaule."

Victor Hugo, with his unerring instinct, and impelled by the experience of a long lifetime of careful observation, made his Jean Valjean immortal by placing him in the centre of a faultless picture of the France and Paris of the earlier half of this century. He drew every figure in that picture with consummate care. The buttons and shoe-buckles



STREET-NOTES IN EUROPE



AT CORDOVA

of a rich bourgeois, the rags of Cosette, and the very bristles on the forbidding features of "La Thénardière," are as closely studied, as admirably rendered, as are the soul-struggles of Valjean. When the lambent light of genius fell upon the work the effect was marvellous. There was romance

enough in it for the most exacting, but romance reposing upon the solid foundations of the best and most instructive realism.

Hugo's early years had been passed in the society of artists and men of letters who were practically in revolt against the real, but he never for an instant lost sight of the immense importance of first copying it exactly in order to interpret it aright. He was a pioneer toward the right kind of realism; and his romantic revolt against the elder classicists was his first step toward the new goal.

Then came Balzac, who poured out his strength in passionate and persistent effort to copy from life a whole gallery of human types, and who was not satisfied merely with making portraits; he painted a wart on a hand or a mole on a cheek with the same loving care, the same conscientious expenditure of minute attention, that he bestowed on the beautiful eyes or the exquisite form of one of his heroines.

The artists caught this inspiration, and men arose who painted garter-buttons and military plumes with as cunning finish, as absolute technical mastery of their models, as they exhibited in their interpretations of the human face. Thenceforward the brethren of the brush went on conquering and to conquer. They had found the right formula, adhered to it, and marched to rare new successes. Meantime, curiously enough, the brethren of the pen had relinquished their hold upon the new method and were returning into the domain of fantasy, where they would have ended by forgetting all about the real world if the artists had not rallied them.

No writer of talent in France can tell how much he owes to the constant influence of that patient art which



SUNDAY EVENING, BERLIN



SPANISH NOTES

has shamed him, a hundred times, into more complete accuracy in his efforts to depict life and its myriads of accessories. The lesson is more conspicuous in France than elsewhere, because art has made greater advances there than in other lands in the present century, and because literature is more completely emancipated, and has wider freedom in choice of subjects.

The theatre has gained immensely by this sincerity in pictorial art. The old sovereigns of the past century, who were content to behold "Phèdre" played in a court dress with a train, would be amazed if they could see the scrupulous care in costume employed by Sarah Bernhardt when she assumes the tragic *rôle*. The painstaking research of a Sardou, making archaeological studies for twenty-five years before venturing to place "Theodora" upon the stage, would have seemed to the playwrights of the Court Theatre at Versailles the vagary of a monomaniac. Yet Sardou's theory is the accepted one to-day.

It is not until we begin to study things in detail that we gain a correct idea of their relations to their surroundings. No writer would, I presume, deny, at this stage of the realistic revolution, that it would be idle to attempt a monograph of a shop-girl, for instance, without delving deeply into the history of her class, the character of her guild, her personal antecedents and parentage, her outward demeanor, and the effects of environment on her mental development. In the days when



A HARVESTER

art was unreal, when the artist merely poetized and idealized figures which he dimly and hastily saw in the throng, how much more difficult such a monograph would have been than it is now, when a hundred artists in every great city are laboriously and enthusiastically studying and jotting down the peculiarities of every class, and the character of each emotion in the scale of human sorrow or joy.

It is to art's precious and often unacknowledged collaboration that we owe some of the finest triumphs of literature. A prince of illustrators, who, like Mr. Reinhart, scatters abroad with lavish hand the wealth of sketches made in a dozen lands, is doing for the novelist, the poet, the essayist—even the political economist—a service, the value of which cannot be estimated in money. This service opens to the writer a thousand new channels of thought, shows him sources of inspiration of which he had not dreamed, and saves him from errors which the critics would visit upon him, and upon those of his school who come after him, even to the third and fourth generation. It banishes prejudice, which is such an enemy of real literature ; it saves men from undertaking long journeys ; it brings one nation to the doors of another. The

sketch - book of the illustrator is like the lamp which Aladdin rubbed when he wanted something wonderful. Open the book, and you are straightway beyond frontiers ; you look down on nations ; you traverse seas and pierce the hearts of continents. A thousand new and brilliant thoughts, which had been, as it were, congealed on the very end of the author's pen, melt and flow in the mellow sunshine of this art which comes with its strong realism to give the note of truth.

Naturally it is no part of my purpose to exalt the pictorial art above that of the pen. The masters in literature study nature and life in the same steadfast and minute way adopted by the masters in art, and even without the aid of the latter they work an enchantment which is abiding. But the minor workers in literature, who try to substitute generalizations for veritable descriptions, should have the need of following the examples of the best masters in art daily dinned into their ears. Let them try, by way of proving to themselves how much they would gain by the adoption of realism, to describe in words, and in an interesting manner, a picture of Napoleon First in the uniform which he customarily wore at the Tuileries.




*maria Gomez
a Toledo*


COMMON SPANISH TYPES, TOLEDO

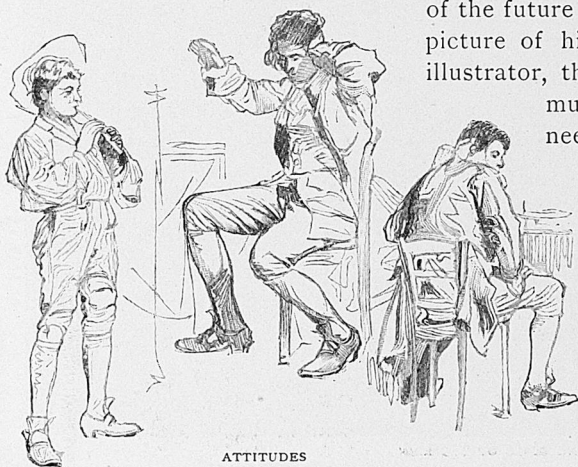
If they will but catalogue all its points faithfully, and omit nothing for the sake of prejudice or individual notions, and then compare this description, crude though it may be, with most of the hasty pen-pictures of the "Little Corporal" by Madame de Rémusat, or other writers of "Memoirs" of Napoleon's time, they will find their own production infinitely the most interesting.

How can any sketch written from memory hope to compete with the careful

picture from the model? I know that "letters survive" when almost all the other visible memorials of a civilization perish. The "Iliad" has travelled down to our day, while thousands of reproductions in art of its heroes have been swept so far below the dust of the centuries that they can never profit us. But I like to think that the fortieth-century students of our epoch will be able to see the tens of thousands of illustrations of the serious and comic phases of our every-day life in this period of democracy. If we had anything like so good materials for appreciating the life of the ancients, how different might have been our notion of them! Let artists of distinction, like Mr. Reinhart, be of good cheer, for science will probably find out a way of preserving their delicate and useful work for the delectation and wonder of the coming generations.

And there will be no excuse for the historical novelist

of the future if he does not produce an accurate picture of his heroes. The photographer, the illustrator, the phonograph, will have done so much for him that there will be little need for his imagination. Will this detract from the romance of history? Who can say? Certainly the historic figure will become less shadowy; it must, in fact, stand in the glare of the real: the rôle of the legendary will be lessened if not annihilated. But there will still be the enchanting glamour of the past about the men and the history-dramas in which they act.


SAAL-DIENER, SKETCHED
IN REICHSTAG, BERLIN


ATTITUDES